DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 436 981 FL 026 142

AUTHOR Short, Deborah J.; Echevarria, Jana
TITLE The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol: A Tool for Teacher-Researcher Collaboration and Professional Development. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-FL-99-09
PUB DATE 1999-12-00
NOTE 4p.; For the report on which this digest is based, see ED 434 533.
CONTRACT ED-99-CO-0008
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC/CLL, 4646 40th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859. For full text: <http://www.cal.org/ericcll>.
PUB TYPE ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperation; *English (Second Language); Evaluation Methods; Lesson Plans; Middle Schools; *Professional Development; Reflective Teaching; *Researchers; Second Language Learning; Student Needs; *Teacher Evaluation; Teacher Improvement; Teachers
IDENTIFIERS *Content Area Teaching; ERIC Digests; *Sheltered English

ABSTRACT

The project described in this digest was designed with the belief that teacher professional growth can best be fostered through sustained collaborative inquiry between teachers and researchers. It set out to incorporate what is known about quality professional development with the special features necessary for meeting the needs of English language learners. The project defined a model of sheltered instruction based on the research of best practices, as well as on the experiences of the participating teachers and researchers. They collaborated in developing the observation tool being utilized in the study, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), which identifies the features of sheltered instruction that can enhance and expand teachers' instructional practice. The SIOP was originally designed as an observation and rating tool for the researchers to use while viewing the participating teachers in the classroom. During the course of the project, however, the participating teachers discovered its potential as a tool for lesson planning and reflection. The model has been used to train middle school teachers to implement effective sheltered strategies in their classes in four large urban school districts (two on the East Coast and two on the West Coast). (VWL)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ERIC DIGEST EDO-FL 99-09 December 1999

ED 436 981

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

A Tool for Teacher-Researcher Collaboration and Professional Development

Deborah J. Short, Center for Applied Linguistics, and Jana Echevarria, California State University, Long Beach

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL 026142

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ERIC DIGEST EDO-FL-99-09 DECEMBER 1999

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

A Tool for Teacher–Researcher Collaboration and Professional Development

Deborah J. Short, Center for Applied Linguistics, and Jana Echevarria, California State University, Long Beach

Professional development for teachers is a complex and multifaceted endeavor and is becoming more so as popularity grows for standards-based education. Teachers generally report feeling pressure to cover the curriculum at nearly any cost. For English language learners, the cost is greater than usual as teachers often inadvertently ignore the language needs of these students in content courses. The project described in this digest was designed with the belief that teacher professional growth can best be fostered through sustained collaborative inquiry between teachers and researchers. It has set out to incorporate what is known about quality professional development with the special features necessary for meeting the needs of English language learners. The project has defined a model of sheltered instruction based on the research of best practices, as well as on the experiences of the participating teachers and researchers. They collaborated in developing the observation tool being utilized in the study, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), which identifies the features of sheltered instruction that can enhance and expand teachers' instructional practice (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, in press). The protocol is composed of 30 items grouped into 3 sections: Preparation, Instruction, and Review/Evaluation. Items are further clustered under Instruction: Building Background, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice/Application, and Lesson Delivery. Items are scored using a Likert scale with scores ranging from 4 to 0.

The SIOP was originally designed as an observation and rating tool for the researchers to use while viewing the participating teachers in the classroom. During the course of the project, however, the participating teachers discovered its potential as a tool for lesson planning and reflection. The model has been used to train middle school teachers to implement effective sheltered strategies in their classes in four large urban school districts (two on the East Coast and two on the West Coast). The project teachers use sheltered instruction in a variety of settings, such as traditional English as a second language (ESL) classes, content-based ESL classes, and sheltered content classes.

Overview of the Project

The project commenced in Spring 1997 when a small cohort of teachers collaborated with the researchers to refine the SIOP, distinguishing between effective strategies for beginning, intermediate, and advanced English language learners; determining "critical" versus "unique" sheltered strategies, the latter being language-modification or support oriented (e.g., slower speech, use of bilingual dictionaries); field testing the SIOP; and providing feedback for making it more user friendly.

The professional development aspect of the project began in earnest in Summer 1997. At two professional development institutes (one on each coast), participants explored the project's goals and the SIOP with the researchers. The teachers also set personal development goals for themselves. During the 1997-98 school year, the researchers began observing and videotaping the classroom instruction of participating teachers. Three videotapes were made of each teacher. The first, shot early in the fall semester, offers the baseline against which the professional development of each teacher can be measured. Between tapings, teachers were observed approximately monthly. After each observation, a SIOP was completed on the teacher, and a score was assigned for each of the 30 items. The researchers shared these analyses with the teachers on an ongoing basis as a means of facilitating teacher growth and validating the research interpretations.

Teachers and researchers met in district-level groups approximately once a month, as well as twice in reunion workshops with the project teachers from each coast, to discuss the research agenda, refine the sheltered instruction model, review and discuss videotaped lessons, and provide constructive feedback. These meetings were quite collaborative. The teachers discussed issues such as how to bring students back together after a cooperative learning science activity, how to conduct a simulation in a history class, and how to differentiate instruction for students at different English proficiency levels in the class.

Preliminary Findings on Teacher Change

After 2 years of working with the teachers, certain areas of professional growth were identified, including the teachers' use of the observation tool for lesson planning, self-monitoring, and reflection; their small but growing awareness of how language can be part of content classes and ways in which it can be naturally integrated; an understanding of effective instruction and ways to determine if students are learning; and the recognition that change takes time and is facilitated by more capable others—both colleagues and researchers.

Using the SIOP for Lesson Planning and Reflection

From the beginning, the teachers were asked to evaluate the categories and individual items of the SIOP for application to their classes. It was during the first monthly meeting in one East Coast district that the teachers explored using the SIOP as a lesson planning tool. Similarly, on the West Coast that fall, a district group was discussing the use of the SIOP for rating lessons. A teacher commented that, "It may even be more useful for planning," and told the group that, after writing his lesson plans, he compared them to the SIOP and made sure he had covered all the components. As a result, the researchers modified the SIOP into a checklist for teachers to use in lesson planning.

At the beginning of the 1997-98 school year, the teachers also selected one category on the SIOP as a personal goal for improvement. One teacher, Ms. Clark, wrote,

> I am interested in this project because I am relatively new to teaching English as a Second Language and I believe that I can benefit a lot by participating in this project. I have a lot to learn and a lot to build on or improve on what I know. . . . I have decided to make "preparation" my professional development goal for this year. This, I think is a good choice given the makeup of my class. They are beginners, but they range from no or low competency to high competency within the beginner level.

While observing her first lesson, the researchers noticed that the lesson plan did not allow much time for the students to talk or to practice the information presented. Interaction was teacher-dominated, and students were called upon primarily to provide brief, factual responses. The grouping pattern was whole class for the entire lesson. After reading feedback on the first observation, Ms. Clark refined her goal:

> I am working on pacing. I have a 6th grade class and the 7th/8th grade class that you observed. The sixth graders are much more language proficient and knowledgeable than the 7th/8th graders. I often times realize during or after a lesson that I have to go at a slower pace for the 7th/8th or that I should have used an entirely different approach with them. These are the dimensions I think I have to have in the forefront when I am preparing lessons.

By thinking about her lesson plans and about her individual students' responses to the lessons, this teacher was able to identify areas for her own personal growth. At the reunion meeting held in March 1998, Ms. Clark said,

> I've been using this as a personal thing. I think I've been benefiting. Now I want to move on. I think I've done well with my goal, and I want to choose another goal. I sit down with the SIOP as I plan my lessons, and see I've done well with pacing.

Observations of Ms. Clark's classroom and a review of her videotaped lessons that year revealed that her preparation skills had improved. She was better able to accommodate the different proficiency levels of her beginning students. She had incorporated small group and pair activities along with whole class discussions and individual work and designed lessons that allowed more time for students to practice their oral language and apply the information they were studying.

Another teacher, Ms. Gately, keeps the SIOP in mind when planning lessons and refers to it from time to time. She has decided that she wants

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

feedback on her lessons. So, before each scheduled visit, she emails her lesson plan to the researchers for review and comment. She describes her language, content, and cognitive objectives, then details the planned activities. This pre-visit interaction gives the researchers an opportunity to make suggestions, refer her to ideas embedded in the SIOP, and answer questions she may have.

The SIOP has also proved to be a valuable instrument for providing feedback to teachers and focusing their self-reflection. Teachers are asked to watch video clips of the taped lessons in light of selected SIOP categories. The group then discusses whether or not the videotaped teacher accomplished those items and how. If the teacher was not successful, ideas are generated for modifying the lesson.

The East Coast teachers chose to have feedback on observed lessons through email exchanges in order to maintain an ongoing dialogue about the lessons and the project. After the observed lessons, comments are written according to the SIOP categories. The interpretation of the lessons is discussed in light of the categories and, where appropriate, suggestions are made for future lessons. The teachers in turn respond with their explanations, sometimes agreeing with the ideas and sometimes explaining why they include or omit a particular task in relation to the entire unit they are presenting to the students. Through the email dialogue, teachers explain what happened the day before as well as what is planned for the following day. This helps to round out the researchers' interpretation of each lesson. It also ensures that the collaborative relationship the researchers have established with the teachers is maintained.

Implementing Language Objectives in Content Lessons

Incorporating language objectives in the sheltered content lessons has been challenging for most of the teachers. The West Coast teachers, who are trained content specialists, do not easily recognize language learning opportunities. If anything, they concentrate on vocabulary development. We expected that the East Coast teachers, most of whom are trained ESL specialists, would incorporate language much more readily. However, they found themselves struggling to cover the content they needed to teach, and in the first year often lost track of the language learning possibilities. Many of the ESL-trained teachers are required to teach several subjects, some of which they are not certified to teach. They find the preparation very time consuming, especially the less experienced teachers.

In the monthly meetings, we periodically explored how language objectives could be incorporated into content lessons. Besides the obvious inclusion of key vocabulary or grammar points, the teachers shared ways to add language skills, such as reading comprehension strategies or process writing. In addition, we discussed ways to increase oral interaction opportunities that allow students to use language for functional purposes, such as negotiating meaning or making hypotheses. As a group, we agreed that lessons might take place over several days, and that language activities might not occur each day but should occur for each multiday lesson or unit.

Assessing Student Comprehension

During the 1997-98 school year, teachers gained confidence and facility in implementing the model. A new challenge was raised at the end of the year and extended into the next year: How does a teacher know that the students understood the instruction? The teachers and researchers decided to approach this issue by focusing on whether students understood the information, tasks, and activities during the lesson (review/evaluation of student knowledge is a category on the SIOP, so answering this comprehension question was in keeping with the model); and by exploring how students' level of comprehension, as reflected in their work, could inform teacher planning.

Videotape analysis was used to ascertain student comprehension during the lesson. In some of the monthly work groups, a teacher would introduce the lesson by providing background on the students and by describing the goals for the lesson and how the lesson fit into the overall curriculum. Using the SIOP, participants watched the videotaped lesson, paying particular attention to student engagement levels, types of student questions, and student behaviors. The group discussed ways that the teacher could have made the message clearer, such as writing the instructions on the overhead while explaining them orally. This simple adjustment to the lesson would have given students visual clues to aid their comprehension as well as a reference point throughout the lesson when they were unclear what to do next.

The group examined student work completed during or subsequent to the videotaped lesson. The researchers emphasized that it is not enough to simply deliver a lesson; students must learn from the process. Discussions in the West Coast meetings shifted from simply rating the lessons using the SIOP to rating a lesson and then analyzing student work samples. Results informed which modifications needed to be made in later lessons. For example, the researchers videotaped Ms. Schumaker's lesson on Africa's geographic regions. The teacher brought student tests on the unit to the work group. The group first rated the videotaped lesson using the SIOP, giving the teacher high marks on most items and deeming it a high quality sheltered lesson. Next, the group analyzed the test itself for elements that might be problematic, indicating questions that lacked clarity or those that might yield unexpected responses. Finally, the group examined the variation in individual student performance on the test. These levels of analyses revealed several difficulties that were caused by the teacher.

Ms. Schumaker admitted that she had assumed the students had easily comprehended the first portion of the test—a set of slides of Africa that she had shown. However, students performed poorly on the five slide identification test questions. The teacher recognized that she would need to teach that section of the unit differently the next time. The group concluded that the test would require more time to complete than had been allotted for most English language learners who concentrate on both the language and content. After the slide identification portion, students faced 20 multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank questions and had to respond to an essay question. The group agreed that when tests have essay questions, other types of questions should be limited to allow adequate time for conceptualizing and composing the essay.

Teacher Change Takes Time and Requires Collaboration

It was the original aim of the project to train a cohort of teachers the first year, follow their students' achievement, and begin training a new cohort of teachers the second year. However, the researchers soon realized that changes in teaching do not take place easily or quickly, even with sustained involvement throughout a school year and summer. Many teachers struggled with some of the issues discussed previously, such as focusing on both language and content objectives. Other teachers, despite some experience working with English language learners, did not have a sophisticated understanding of the needs of students going through the second language acquisition process. Their professional training was in a content area, not ESL. It took significant time for those teachers to understand that ELLs require significant amounts of comprehensible input as well as curricular modifications.

Teachers reported that initially, rather than implementing major components of the model, they isolated certain items within the model, such as slowing their presentation of material and using more visual clues, and focused their attention only on those features. At the beginning, this approach was useful for several teachers but slowed the process of practicing and perfecting the entire model. However slow the process, it was enhanced and facilitated through collaboration. Teachers spoke highly of the benefit of working within their group, whether at the monthly meetings, the school site, or the summer institutes. A number of teachers particularly enjoyed the opportunity for cross-district collaboration.

Conclusion

The current structure of schools and district-led professional development provide relatively few teachers with the opportunity to reflect on and analyze their instruction and the work of their students to the degree that has been accomplished in this project. There is rarely any occasion when teachers can come together and collaborate on the teaching and learning process, certainly none that are sustained over time. The teachers who participated in this study have created learning communities in which they can discuss issues of real importance and can set the pace for their own professional growth.

References

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M.E., & Short, D. (in press). *Making content comprehensible for English language learners: The SIOP model*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

This digest is drawn from a report prepared by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence, *The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol: A Tool for Teacher–Research Collaboration and Professional Development* (1999), by Deborah J. Short and Jana Echevarria.

This digest was prepared with funding from the U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Library of Education, under contract no. ED-99-CO-0008. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of ED, OERI, or NLE.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE